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The Study of History and the Evolution of Historiography in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England

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THE STUDY OF HISTORY AND
THE EVOLUTION OF HISTORIOGRAPHY
IN LATE TUDOR AND EARLY STUART ENGLAND

by

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"Truth is the sovereigne praise of an History"

Edmund Bolton, Hypercritica

Preface

The writer set out in this paper to investigate how Englishmen in the Late Tudor and Early Stuart Eras viewed the study of History: Did they study History? If so, why? Had History a purpose? And in turn how did the answers to these questions affect their Historiography? Throughout we have relied almost exclusively on the works published during the period, which, through the kindness of Newberry Library, we were able to use in their original editions. We have quoted at length from these, retaining the original language in order to give color to the paper and to allow the reader to get a feel of the period and its mode of expression. The reader will find that History was widely read since it was considered important. And that the demand for more and better histories influenced the evolution of Historiography.

Contents

Preface		i
Chapter I	Introduction	1
Chapter II	Why History was Read	7
Chapter III	The Types of Histories Read	13
Chapter IV	The Office of the Historian	26
Chapter V	History seen as a Handbook for Statesmen and its effect on Historiography	34
Chapter VI	The Handmaids of History	48
Chapter VII	Conclusion	65
Bibliography		69

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In his Defence of Poetry Sir Philip Sidney writes that the historian "denieth in a great chafe, that any man for teaching of vertue, and vertuous actions is comparable to him."¹ The historian, Sidney continues, bases his claim to superiority, upon the belief that, by concrete examples, he can present to his readers the cumulative experience of the ages. The accepted purpose of history was to teach virtue by furnishing to the individual examples for imitation or for warning. This was a convention of long standing. The convention of moral purpose, with all that implies, established by the Greek and Roman historians, persisted steadily in England from the time Bede wrote the preface to his Ecclesiastical History well into the seventeenth century. Among those who used the ancient formula were Polydore Vergil (1534), Thomas Wylliam in his Dedication to the History of Italy (1549), the anonymous writer of The Institution of a Gentleman (1568), John Stow in his Chronicle (1580), Philip

¹ Sir Philip Sidney, Defence of Poetry (London, 1965), p. 105.

Sidney in his Defence of Poetry (1583), George Puttenham in his Arte of English Poesie (1589), Thomas Bedingfield in his translation of Macchiavelli's Florentine History (1595), James Cleland in his Institution of a Nobleman (1607), John Pits in the Relationum Historiarum (1619), Richard Brathwaite in A Survey of History (1638).

The reason for this repetition of historical patterns was to be found not only in the sameness of human nature, but also in the persistent oneness of God. Thomas North in his translation of Amyot's preface to Plutarch's Lives summed up the historian as "a register to set downe the judgments and definitive sentences of God's Court."² Sir Walter Raleigh was still emphasizing the undeviating justice of God when he wrote in the preface to his History of the World

The judgements of God are for ever unchangeable; neither is he wearied by the long processe of time and won to give his blessing in one age, to that which he hath cursed in another. Wherefore those that are wise or whose wisdom, if it be not great, yet is true and well grounded; will bee able to discern, the bitter fruites of irreligious policie, as well among those examples that are found in ages removed farre from the present, as in those of latter times.³

²Jacquet Amyot, The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romans (London, 1579), no pagination.

³Sir Walter Raleigh, History of the World (London, 1614), Sign. A₃ recto.

This then was the premise upon which English historians up to this time had pleaded the importance of the study of history - that the lessons of history can be applied to the problems of the present not only because man remains the same, but also because God remains the same yesterday, today, and forever, ever rewarding and punishing according to his unchanging justice. Since they saw the matter of history to be chiefly concerned with the rise and fall of nations, the inevitable conclusion in regard to historical methods was as stated by Thomas Blundeville, "as touching the providence of God, we have to note for what causes and by what meanes hee overthroweth one kingdom & setteth up an other."⁴

Yet they saw that history also dealt with men as the doers of deeds which were recorded in history and which determined the fate of nations. Kings might learn in history, therefore, not only the lessons concerning how to govern their kingdom, but more important the lessons concerning their own dependence upon God and the misery of his vengeance. Nobles and private men could learn how to gain the

⁴Thomas Blundeville, True Order and Method of Writing and Reading Histories. Reprinted in Huntington Library Quarterly, III, 165.

rewards and escape the punishments appointed by God.

What occurred in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was a shift, ever so slowly, yet ever so perceptively, from the view of history as a teacher of morals to a teacher of wisdom, in particular political wisdom. From being a repertory of sins punished, it became a storehouse of historical parallels. While Raleigh's History of the World can be called the archetype of all the moralizing histories of the seventeenth century or Bacon's Henry VII an outstanding example of history written for its political utility, in most historical writing of the period these various purposes of history were combined or perhaps confused, as the case might be.

It can be said that this shift in emphasis was in part caused by the influence and example of Italian historians. By 1579 the History of Italy of Francesco Guicciardini had been translated into English, followed by Machiavelli's History of Florence in 1595. Francis Bacon was very much under this Italian influence when he wrote "we are much beholden to Machiavelli and other writers of that class who openly and unfeignedly declare or describe what men do, and not what they ought to do."⁵ What this expressed was a desire to see

⁵ Francis Bacon, The Works of Francis Bacon, ed. James Spedding et al. (London, 1860), V, 17. Hereafter cited as Works.

historical characters as true to life as possible, so that lessons could be learned from their actions which were relevant to the life now rather than the hereafter.

This in turn brought about a change in what constituted a historical fact, what were historical sources, what was a historical cause. It was felt that facts should be more copious and more authentic. God would still remain the first cause of human events, but more stress was now laid on the secondary causes, the acts of men. Facts, to a writer of a medieval chronicle, were what he saw and heard about, a few documents which were given circulation through copies, e.g., Magna Carta, the charters of his monastery or the privileges of his town, and what he read in the works of his predecessors. Even at the close of the sixteenth century historians still reported what they heard from influential friends as though it were facts as well as opinion; much of what was in the chronicles was still accepted, but there was a tendency to play down the miraculous element in the narratives. Perhaps the most important trend of this time was the increasing use that was made of state papers, the records of the law courts and local archives.⁶ It is true that access

⁶ Levi Fox, English Historical Scholarships in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London, 1956).

to state papers was dependent on the favor of a high official - Camden was granted the use of them by Lord Burghley - or on the courtesy of a great record collector such as Robert Cotton. It should be noted that however big the gaps, however uncritical the assumption that any document in an archive represented the truth rather than a means of getting at the truth, the work of the writers of the late sixteenth century and of the early seventeenth century established as a principle of English historiography that documents and not secondary authorities are the essential foundation of reliable history.

CHAPTER II

WHY HISTORY WAS READ

During this period the demand for histories increased not only among the nobility and gentry but also among the middle class, especially in cosmopolitan London.¹ Gradually history was being introduced into the schools.² By 1622 William Camden had founded a chair of history at Oxford of which the first occupant was Degory Wheare (1573-1647), whose published lectures on the study of history, De Ratione et Methodo Legendi Historias (1623), became a standard work on historical writing and thought and remained so well into the eighteenth century.³

All the literate social classes were interested in history. Thomas Blundeville's The True order and Methode of

¹Louis B. Wright, Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England (Chapel Hill, 1935).

²W. H. Woodward, Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance (Cambridge, 1906).

³Degory Wheare, The Method and Order of Reading Both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories, in which the most Excellent Historians are Reduced into the Order in which they are Successively to be Read; and the Judgments of Learned Men, concerning each of them, Subjoin'd (London, 1694), translated by Edmund Bohum.

wryting and reading Histories, according to the precepts of Francisco Patrico, and Accontio Tridentio . . . set forth in our vulgar speach, to the great profite and commoditie of all those that delight in Hystories,⁴ was the direct outgrowth of an enthusiasm for the study of history on the part of an important group of men at court who had come to appreciate the value of historical learning. Indeed the great Lord Burghley actively encouraged historiography by requesting Camden to write a history of the reign of Elizabeth and he even opened his own papers to Camden for the purpose. Both Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Bacon were courtiers, though out of favor at the time they wrote their histories. Perhaps the most noticeable increase of interest in history occurred among the rising bourgeoisie who saw that the reading of history needed no apology. Even the sternest Puritan was impressed with the respectable examples of virtue and vice to be gleaned in the annals of the past.⁵ This is seen in the polite conduct or better-termed "how-to-be-a-gentleman" books which became popular during this period such as

⁴Reprinted in Huntington Library Quarterly, III, 149-170.

⁵Louis B. Wright, "The Elizabethan Middle-Class Taste for History," The Journal of Modern History, III, 175-197.

the anonymous The Institution of a Gentleman (1568); James Cleland's Institution of a younge noble man (1607); Richard Brathwaite's The Scholler's Medley, Or, An Intermixt Discourse Upon Historical and Poetical Relations (1614), which he enlarged and issued again in 1638 under the title A Survey of History, Or, A Nursery for Gentry; and Henry Peacham's The Compleat Gentleman (1622). These appealed to the ambitious middle-class families, and probably to many others whose gentility was recent.

The Institution of a Gentleman (London, 1568) having considerably preceded the publication of Cleland, Brathwaite, and Peacham, is presumed to be the earliest English treatise on the subject. The anonymous author states that "there can be nothing more meete for gentlemen than the reading of histories;" he also calls it "a most excellent and laudable exercise," most profitable for younge men to "learn the right institution of their lives."⁶ Cleland's Institution is a work on the education of a young gentleman, giving advice on how to choose a tutor and then proceeding to tell the tutor what and how to teach the various subjects. Of history he says:

⁶In the chapter "To reade Hystories; and to avoid Idleness," no pagination.

For histories show him Scipio's and Alexander's continencie; of Decius, Curtius and Thrasibulus love towards their countrie: and such where of hee may learne good lessons, in making the application to himself.⁷

They are deeds and not words, which the Pupil should have for the cheife object and subject in that study. The tutor should rather informe him how to imitate the person described, then the describer, if his actions be worthy, otherwise howe hee should shunne them, least fale into the errors.⁸

Tutors should not so much busie their braines to cause their Pupils to conceave and retain the date of Carthage, her ruine and destruction, as to tel them of Sicipo & Hannibals manner, and valiant exploits, in both sides: nether should they be so curious of the place wher Mariellus died, as of the reason hee died.⁹

Brathwaite dealt with the educational benefits of history.

In his The Schollers Medley he insists that "a good Historian will alwaies expresse the actions of good men with an Emphasis, to sollicite the Reader to the affecting the like meanes, whereby hee may attaine the like end."¹⁰ In his A Survey of

⁷James Cleland, Institution of a Younge Noble Man (Oxford, 1607), 74.

⁸Ibid., 83.

⁹Ibid., 84.

¹⁰Richard Brathwaite, The Schollers Medley (London, 1614), 6. Cited in Wright, Middle Class Culture etc., 299. Brathwaite (1588-1673) attended Oriel College, Oxford, and studied law at Cambridge and the Inns of Court.

History he goes on to say that "the true use and scope of all Histories ought to tend to no other purpose, than a true Narration of what is done, or hath been atchieved either in Forraigne or Domesticke affaires; with a modest application (for present use) to caution us in things offensive and excite us to the management of employments in themselves generous, and worthy imitation."¹¹ Brathwaite had great faith in the benefits of history ranging from the disciplining of soldiers to the curing of drunkards.¹²

Henry Peacham (1576-1643), graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, lived in London where he tutored young men preparing for the University. He was tutor to the three sons of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, for whose youngest son William he wrote The Complete Gentleman.¹³ It is a quaint medley of Peacham's own interests, including fishing, projected as a plan for the proper education of a young gentleman. Peacham felt that a gentleman should have some acquaintance with history and proceeded to recommend Camden's Britannia and Selden's

¹¹ Richard Brathwaite, A Survey of History etc., (London, 1638), 1.

¹² Ibid., 395.

¹³ Henry Peacham, The Complete Gentleman (London, 1622). It went through four editions by 1634.

Anelection Anglo-Britannion as the best introductory works on British history.

All these defenses of history go back to the fundamental assumption of the usefulness of knowledge. History was perhaps one of the most prized fields of learning in this period because it seemed the most immediately useful. A catalogue of what one could learn from history would have to include: morals, virtue, patriotism, statecraft, prudence, wisdom and truth. History could tame the Irish, cure drunkenness, help the insane. One could rise in the world through a knowledge of the providence of God in history. Both the Crown and Parliament knew the propaganda value of history. The uses of history were almost as various as the understandings of men.

CHAPTER III

THE TYPES OF HISTORIES READ

The taste in historical reading was varied, but by far the most popular form, especially among the Middle-Class, were the chronicles. It is significant of the middle-class interest in chronicle-history that the two most important and prolific writers of the last half of the sixteenth century were both tradesmen who retained their connections with trade as long as they lived. Richard Grafton (d. 1572), printer and prosperous member of the great Grocer's Company, and John Stow (1525-1605), more learned if less prosperous, a member of the Merchant Taylor's Company, throughout their industrious lives were rivals in the craft of setting forth the glory of England. Each abused the other for inaccuracy, but both were imbued with the same zeal to make available to commonalty a record of England's fame. Grafton's An Abridgement of the Chronicles of England ran five editions between 1562 and 1572, Stow's A Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles ran fourteen editions between 1565 and 1618, while his more expanded Chronicles of England from Brute unto this present yeare 1580 went through eight editions by 1631.

Grafton began his career as a chronicler in 1543 by

publishing for the first time Hardyng's Chronicle.¹ The printer added a dedication in verse to Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, a preface in verse, and a continuation in prose from the beginning of Edward IV's reign, where Hardyng stopped, to the year of publication. Stow, a severe critic of all of Grafton's original writing, declared in his Summarie (1570),² that Grafton's Hardyng differed entirely from a manuscript copy of Hardyng in his possession. Grafton replied in his Abridgement (1570),³ that Hardyng had doubtless written more chronicles than one. A more important service was rendered by the printer in 1548, when he reissued Hall's Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke. This valuable work was first printed by Berthelet in 1542; there the chronicle ceased in 1532. Hall died in 1547, and in the next year Grafton brought out his edition, carrying the record down to the death of Henry VIII. Stow charged Grafton with mangling Hall's chronicle,

¹Richard Grafton, The Chronicle of John Harding (London, 1543).

²John Stow, A Summarie of Englysche Chronicles (London, 1570).

³Richard Grafton, Abridgement of the Chronicles of Englande (London, 1570).

and Grafton replied that he was a friend of Hall and only changed his obscure phrases into clear language. Grafton reissued Hall with a new preface in 1550. After he had retired from business as a printer Grafton wrote his first original work, Abridgement of the Chronicles of England, which he dedicated to Lord Robert Dudley. In the dedicatory address (dated 1562) Grafton explained that he was moved to compile the book because he had seen a very inaccurate work bearing the same title already in circulation. This censure was doubtless aimed at Stow's Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles also dedicated to Dudley. The earliest edition of Stow's Summarie now extant is 1565; but there is doubtless an earlier edition. In 1565 Grafton issued his Manuell of the Chronicles of England, dedicated to the Stationer's Company. In the preface he explains that book is an abridgment of his earlier volume which had been imprudently plagiarized. Stow replied at length in a new edition of his Summarie (1570), and sought to convict Grafton of gross ignorance and of garbling Hardyng and Hall. Grafton vindicated himself in the preface to a new edition of his original work, Abridgement (1570).

The works of Grafton and Stow alone attest to the popularity of epitomes during this period. In addition one

of the best known of the early chronicle abridgements was one begun by Thomas Lanquet and finished by Thomas Cooper (1517-1592) in 1549. Later editions of this appeared in 1560 and 1565 under the title Cooper's Chronicle.⁴ A work arranged for ready reference was Saturni Ephemerides sive Tabula Historico-Chronologica by Henry Isaacson⁵ (1581-1654). It was as the name states a table with the countries arranged in vertical columns and the years in horizontal lines. It must be stated, however, that although chronicles and epitomes were popular, they were not without their critics. Edmund Bolton makes a disparaging comment on them in his Hypercritica, characterizing them as "vast vulgar Tomes for the most part by the husbandry of Printers, and not by appointment of the Prince or Authority of the Commonweal."⁶

The common opinion that history was a teacher of

⁴ Thomas Cooper, Cooper's Chronicle (London, 1560).

⁵ Henry Isaacson, Saturni Ephemerides sine Tabula Historico-Chronologica (London, 1633).

⁶ Edmund Bolton, Hypercritica, or, a Rule of Judgement For Writing or Reading Our Histories. Reprinted in Joel and Spingarn, Critical Essays of the 17th Century (Oxford, 1908), I, 97-98.

moral living through examples was the direct inspiration for such works as the extremely popular Mirror for Magistrates.⁷ This was a collection of stories from English history told in verse, each of which described the catastrophe that overcame some great man because of excessive pride, ambition, or downright wickedness. Such a compendium of lines was bound to have, and this one definitely did have, an enormous influence on later biographical-historical works. New editions or reissues continued to appear at fairly regular intervals between 1559 and 1620. Another example of the moralizing writer was George Whetstone (1544-1587), a Londoner, who wrote The English Myrror. A Regard Wherein Al estates may behold the Conquests of Envy: containing ruine of common weales, murther of Princes, causes of heresies, and in all ages, spoile of divine and human blessings . . . A worke safely, and necessarie to be read by every good subject.⁸ The first division of the work treats of miscellaneous incidents in foreign history, the second division treats of the

⁷Mirror of Magistrates (London, 1575). For a longer discussion confer Lily Campbell, Tudor Conceptions of History and Tragedy in "A Mirror of Magistrates" (Berkeley, 1936).

⁸George Whetstone, The English Myrror (London, 1586).

reign of the Tudors in England and supplies much interesting detail respecting recent conspiracies against Elizabeth; the third division discusses the duties of rulers and the functions performed in a well regulated state by the nobility, the clergy, the yeomanry, and officers of Justice. Examples were drawn from the whole of history to show the dangers of envy, which included political crimes. And from English history he shows the inevitable end of traitors and the successes which follow rulers who put down rebellions and establish peace.

Indeed the lives of traitors were a popular genre of history. Examples were held up to the public by Thomas Lodge (1558-1625), son of the Lord Mayor of London and a later convert to Roman Catholicism, in his The Life and Death of William Longbeard, the most famous and witty English Traitor, borne in the City of London. Accompanied with manye other most pleasant and prettie histories (1593),⁹ which besides Longbeard contained the stories of pirates and other malefactors. Thomas Gainsford (d. 1624) brought out The True and Wonderful History of Perkin Warbeck, Proclaiming himself

⁹Thomas Lodge, The Life and Death of William Longbeard. Reprinted London, 1866.

Richard the fourth in which he warned against "such facinor-
ous attempts, breaking out to finde fault with men in
authority, and audacious inuections against the government."¹⁰

A little later Henry Peacham, drawing examples mainly from
Roman history illustrated the evil end of traitors in The
Duty of All True Subjects To Their King: As also to their
Native Country, in time of extremity and danger. With some
memorable examples of the miserable ends of perfidious
Traitors."¹¹

These lives of traitors were but a part of the histo-
ries written by Englishmen about England, for Englishmen
were primarily fascinated with themselves and historians were
encouraged to devote themselves to their own country, and to
its archives. John Clapham wrote in the preface of his
Historie of England that "there is no Historie so fitte for
Englishman as the very Historie of England."¹² Brathwaite
echoed this in The English Gentleman - "there is no History

¹⁰ Thomas Gainsford, The True and Wonderful History of
Perkin Warbeck (London, 1618), Sign. A₂.

¹¹ Henry Peacham, The Duty of All True Subjects To
Their King (London, 1633).

¹² John Clapham, The History of England, the first
Book (London, 1602), Sign. A₃ recto.

more usefull, or relation more needful for any Gentleman, than our owne Moderne Chronicles."¹³ The Englishman's desire to know about his native England had been whetted in 1586 when William Camden published his Britannia,¹⁴ a historical reconstruction of the topography of Roman and Anglo-Saxon Britain, though he went further than this and carried his investigations through the Danish and Norman conquests. At the urging of Lord Burghley, who gave him access to state papers, he worked on a history of the reign of Queen Elizabeth which he published under the title of Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum Regnante Elizabetha (1615).¹⁵ This work was highly praised by John Selden, who considered the Annales and Bacon's Historie of the reign of King Henry the Seventh (1622)¹⁶ as the only two serious works of English history up to his day. Other popular works on England were Clapham's two-part The Historie of England the first Book

¹³ Richard Brathwaite, The English Gentleman (London, 1630), 218.

¹⁴ William Camden, Britannia (London, 1586).

¹⁵ William Camden, Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum Regnante Elizabetha (London, 1615).

¹⁶ Francis Bacon, The Historie of the reign of King Henry the Seventh (London, 1622).

(1602) and The Historie of Great Britannie (1606);¹⁷ The History of Great Britaine (1611)¹⁸ by John Speed is another example of these surveys on a national scale. On the local level, perhaps John Stow's Survey of London¹⁹ was the most widely read.

Englishmen, however, were not only interested in their own history, but ancient history and the contemporary history of other countries had an audience. Some of these works were written by Englishmen though many of them were translations of foreign histories, especially Roman, French, and Italian works. Thomas Nicolls,²⁰ Nicolas Howard,²¹ Thomas

¹⁷ Both were published in London.

¹⁸ John Speed, History of Great Britaine (London, 1611). This won Speed the distinction of being termed the first real historian in the modern sense. Instead of writing a chronicle or compiling annals, he achieved a flowing narrative which was strengthened by the use of unpublished documents and which gave full credit to his predecessors even when repeating their errors.

¹⁹ John Stow, Survey of London (London, 1603).

²⁰ Thomas Nicolls, The Hystory writtene by Thucidides . . . translated oute of Frence into the English language by Thomas Nicolls Citezeine and Goldesmyth of London (London, 1550).

²¹ Nicolas Howard, A Brief Chronicle, where in are described shortlve the Originall, and the successive estate of the Romaine weale public . . . (London, 1564).

Fortescue,²² Edmund Bolton,²³ and Thomas North²⁴ were but a few of the translators of ancient history out of the Latin or French editions. They felt an obligation to make historical works available to the common man (i.e. middle-class)²⁵ as Fortescue declared in his preface that "To profite nevertheless generally, was my desire, but chiefly the lesse learned . . ."²⁶ Robert Basset took upon himself the task of writing The Lives of all the Roman Emperors²⁷ from the original sources. Many of the General or Universal Histories began

²² Thomas Fortescue, The Foreste or Collection of Histories, no less profitable, then pleasant and necessarie, dooen out of Frenche into English by Thomas Fortescue (London, 1571).

²³ Edmund Bolton, The Roman Histories of Lucius Julius Flororus . . . (London, 1618).

²⁴ Thomas North, The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romans (London, 1676).

²⁵ Louis Wright, "Translations For the Elizabethan Middle Class," The Library, XIII, 312-331. Wright points out that among the many evidences of fervent nationalism which burned in England in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the recurring emphasis on the pre-eminence of the English tongue as a medium for literary expression. Hence we find many translations avowedly made to reach the common man.

²⁶ Fortescue, The Foreste, Sign. A₄ verso.

²⁷ Robert Basset, The Lives of all the Roman Emperors (London, 1636).

with Creation and some such as Raleigh's History of the World never got beyond ancient history in spite of their impressive titles. The contemporary history of other countries also had some following, at least among the governing classes, especially the history of Italy. Francesco Guicciardini's History of Italy was translated into English in 1579, and in 1595 Thomas Bedingfield (d. 1613) did the same to Machiavelli's History of Florence,²⁸ both of which were to play an important part in the evolution of historiography during the period. Traditional English interest in the Low Countries was fed by Thomas Churchyard's translation of Emanuel Meteranus' A True Discourse Historical, of the Succeeding Governors in the Netherlands and the civill warres there begun in the yeere 1565.²⁹ The Near East was presented by Richard Knolles (1545-1610) in his The General historie of the Turkes,³⁰ which went through five editions between 1603 and 1638; and by Thomas Gainsfield's Historie of Trebizond³¹ which is a collection of

²⁸ Thomas Bedingfield, Florentine History (London, 1595).

²⁹ Thomas Churchyard, A True Discourse Historical, etc. (London, 1602).

³⁰ Richard Knolles, The General historie of the Turkes (London, 1603).

³¹ Thomas Gainsfield, Historie of Trebizond (London, 1616).

romantic stories of the area.

In this sea of historical writing Church History was not forgotten. One of the early truly scientific works of history was John Selden's (1584-1658) The Historie of Tithes;³² this work caused a furor with its denial of divine law in tithing and it was suppressed. Sir Henry Spelman (1564-1641) in his most important work Concilia, decreta, leges, constitutiones in re ecclesiarum orbis britannici³³ attempted to place English Church History on the basis of genuine documents. As there were then factions in the Church of England, this found reflection in its historians, from rabid Anglicans such as Peter Heylyn (1600-1662), the author of History of the Sabbath,³⁴ in which he attacked the Sabbatarians as having deceived themselves and others, to the mild Anglicanism of Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), among whose many ecclesiastical histories is The Historie of the Holy Warre.³⁵ The Catholics

³² John Selden, The Historie of Tithes (London, 1618).

³³ Henry Spelman, Concilia, decreta, leges, constitutiones in re ecclesiarum orbis Britannici (London, 1634).

³⁴ Peter Heylyn, The Historie of the Sabbath (London, 1636).

³⁵ Thomas Fuller, The Historie of the Holy Warre (London, 1639). Fuller flourished as a Church Historian after our period.

in Douay were also publishing Church Histories of England. Nicolas Harpsfeld (1519-1579) put out Historia Anglicana Ecclesiastica³⁶ which had a subscript by Edmund Campion. Richard Broughton (d. 1635), one-time secretary to the Duchess of Buckingham, dedicated to her and her mother, the Countess of Rutland, his The Ecclesiastical Historie of Great Britaine deduced by Ages and Centenaries.³⁷ But as a writer he was dull, laborious, inaccurate and credulous to a degree rare even for the age in which he lived.

Wide and varied were the reading tastes of our period from the ancient chronicles to the most current of problems, from the history of persons to that of places and things, from the secular to the sacred. The Englishman of this period who could read, and it was a literate age, read history as the number of histories of all sorts and their many editions testify.

³⁶Nicolas Harpsfeld, Historia Anglicana Ecclesiastica, edited by Richard Gibbons (Douay, 1622).

³⁷Richard Broughton, The Ecclesiastical Historie of Great Britaine deduced by ages and centenaries (Douay, 1633).

CHAPTER IV
THE OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN

Having seen the many forms of historical writings popular during the period one can ask how did the historian view his office, how did he approach his subject? Robert Bolton in his Hypercritica, or a rule of Judgement for writing or reading our Histories (1618) sums up the attitudes towards the historical writing of his day. "Christian Authors," he noted, "while for their ease they shuffled up the reasons of the events, in briefly referring all causes immediately to the Will of God, have generally neglected to inform the Readers in the ordinary means of carriage in human affairs, and thereby singularly maimed their narrations."¹ In another place he writes " . . . he who relates events without the Premisses and Circumstances deserves not the name of an Historian."² Bolton goes on to admonish the historian that in writing a history he bears a fourfold person and thereby has a fourfold duty:

¹Bolton, Hypercritica, 85.

²Ibid., 84.

I. As a Christian Cosmopolite, to discover God's Assistances, Disappointments, and Overruling in human affairs, as he is sensibly conversant in the Actions of men; to establish the just Fear of his celestial Majesty against Atheists and Voluptuaries, for the general good of mankind and the World.

II. As a Christian Patriot, to disclose the Causes and Authors of thy Countries good or evil, to establish thereby the lawful Liberty of Nations.

III. As a Christian Subject, to observe to the Reader the benefit of Obedience and Damage of Rebel-lions; to establish thereby the regular authority of Monarchs and Peoples Safety.

IV. As a Christian Paterfamilias, so to order thy Studies, that though neglect not thy private, because the publick hath few real Friends; and Labours of this noble Nature are fitter to get Renown than Riches, which they will need not amplyfy.³

This was an advance beyond Sir Walter Raleigh, who in his History of the World (1614) saw the first duty of the historian as noting God's judgments, history being the narra-tion of "actions which were memorable."⁴ The historian had as his obligation to describe great public events and the actors who took part in them. Raleigh had an overall provi-dential interpretation of history in which the prime cause was all important and secondary causes were of minor import.

Richard Brathwaite, discussing the qualities of a good historian in his A Survey of History, stressed the need

³Ibid., 114-115.

⁴Raleigh, History of the World, preface, no pagination.

of honesty in a historian.

He will write but upon singular Grounds, reasons impregnable; conferring with the best to make his narrations confirmed of the best: Hee writes the stories of Princes truely, without concealing their errors (by way of silencing them) or comment upon a History, Annexing to it an unnecessary glosse. He will not be so engaged to any, as that he will bee restrained of his Scope; or so countermanded, as that he must of necessity illustrate⁵ vice; vertue cannot passe without her character.

This seems to speak of the need of research, but not all thought this way. Bacon saw the office of the historian as being connected with understanding the philosophical end, or purpose, of history rather than that of being engaged in research. It seemed to him that historians would have to become philosophers. An historian was an interpreter of facts rather than a gatherer of facts. Bacon made this distinction sharply in his work the Parascene:

For as much as relates to the work itself of the intellect, I shall perhaps be able to master that by myself; but the materials on which the intellect has to work are so widely spread, that one must employ factors and merchants to go everywhere in it to be somewhat beneath the dignity of an undertaking like mine that I should spend my own time in a matter which is open to almost everyman's industry. That however which is the main part of the matter I will myself now supply by diligently and exactly setting forth the method and description of a history of this kind, such as shall satisfy my intention.⁶

⁵Brathwaite, A Survey of History, 21.

⁶Works, IV, 251.

Whether one is an interpreter or a gatherer of facts, he is confronted with the problem of how to define the genera and species of histories. It might be a simple distinction between "history" and "lives" such as faced Amyot: "The one, which setteth down mens doings and adventure at length, is called by the common name of an History. The other, which declareth their natures, sayings and manners, is properly named their Lives."⁷ A larger schema was given by Peter Heylyn in his Cosmographie containing the chorography and Historie of the World when he distinguished history proper from its sources on the basis of form:

First commentaries set down only a naked continuance of Events and Actions, without Motives and designs, the Counsells, Speeches, Occasions and Pretexts of business.

For Annals next they are a bare recitall only of the Actions happening every year, without regard had to causes and Pretexts, of any of the Chief Ingredients required in History.

But Diaries or Journals as the name imports, containing the action of each day.

Last of all, for Chronologies they are only bare suputations of times, with some brief touch upon the Actions therein hapning.

Out of these four as out of the four Elements, the Quintessence of History is extracted: borrowing from Annals time, from Diaries and Commentaries matter, from Chronologies consent of time and

⁷ Amyot, Lives, "to the reader," no pagination.

co-eternity of Princes; and thereto adding of her own all such other Ornaments in which these four are found defective.⁸

Others sought to divide history according to subject matter; Degory Wheare, Camden professor of history at Oxford, set forth a three-part division: Divine which treats of "God and Divine things;" Natural which treats "Naturals and then Causes;" and Human which relates the "actions of man as living in Society." Human is divided again into Political or Civil and Ecclesiastical. They in turn could be either Universal, presenting the actions of all, or Particular, presenting one people, or city, or commonwealth.⁹ In the same year in which Wheare published his lectures (1623) Sir Francis Bacon wrote De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum and put forth a similar yet more complete division of history, which is still quite useful.

Bacon divided history into Natural, which treats the deeds and works of nature, and Civil which treats those of men. Civil history is then divided into three species: first, Sacred or Ecclesiastical; next, that called Civil History proper; and lastly, the History of Learning and the

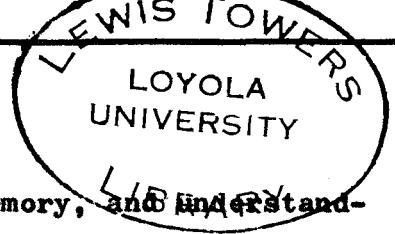
⁸Peter Heylyn, Cosmographie (London, 1652), 21.

⁹Wheare, The Method and Order of Reading . . . Histories, 16.

Arts. Civil History, properly so called, is pre-eminent among human writing in dignity and authority. It in turn is divided into three kinds - Memorials, Antiquities, and Perfect History. Memorials are history unfinished, or the first rough drafts of history such as Commentaries and Registers; Antiquities are the remnants of histories which have escaped the shipwreck of time. Perfect History in turn is divided into three kinds - Chronicles or Annals; Lives; Narrations or Relations. "Of these the first excels in estimation and glory; the second, in profit and examples; and the third in verity and sincerity." History Ecclesiastical receives nearly the same divisions as History Civil: for there are Ecclesiastical Chronicles; there are Lives of the Fathers; there are Relations of Synods. But in itself it is properly divided into History Ecclesiastical, History of Prophecy, and History of Divine Judgment or Providence. The History of Learning and the Arts which fills out the division of History is cited as a lacuna.¹⁰

Bacon considered history as one of the three major divisions of human learning. He divided all human learning into poetry, history, and philosophy, which were ruled over

¹⁰ Bacon, Works, IV, 304.



by the three faculties of imagination, memory, and understanding respectively. By saying that memory presides over history Bacon is in reality saying that the essential work of history is to recall and record the past in its facts as they actually happened. This negated two popular errors of the period concerning history: 1) that the historian could foreknow the future; 2) that the historian's main task was to detect a divine plan running through events, the facts. Now the facts themselves were important.

Although this definition of history had freed it from the errors of medieval historical thought, a problem still remained. The rediscovery of the past was now the program of history, yet it lacked the methods or principles by which this program could be carried out. R. G. Collingwood in The Idea of History criticized Bacon along these lines:

Bacon's definition of history as the realm of memory was wrong, because the past only requires historical investigation so far as it is not remembered. If it could be remembered, there would be no need of historians. Bacon's own contemporary Camden was already at work in the best Renaissance tradition on the topography and archaeology of Britain, showing how unremembered history could be reconstructed from data somewhat as, at the same time, natural scientists were using data as the basis of scientific thesis. The question how the historian's understanding works to supplement the deficiencies of his memory was a question that Bacon never asked.¹¹

¹¹R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York, 1956), 58.

Be that as it may Bacon's work was a major step in the development of English historiography. The move from pious conjecture to hard facts, from history as a teacher of morals to history as a teacher of wisdom, especially political wisdom, can look to Bacon as one of its main watersheds.

CHAPTER V
HISTORY SEEN AS A HANDBOOK FOR STATESMEN
AND ITS EFFECT ON HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the historical evolution of the period, one emerging fact was that history was being seen as a handbook for statesmen. This was partially due to the Renaissance consciousness of the State as an entity; and this in turn implied the conception of a science of statecraft, a science which would draw its data from the records and examples of history. Such a practical as opposed to a moral purpose is evident in the first separately printed treatise in English on the philosophy of history, Thomas Blunderville's True Order and Method of Writing and Reading Histories (1574), an adaptation and an abridgement of two tracts in Italian. Encouraged by Court officials he finished the work and dedicated it to the Earl of Leicester:

Knowynge youre Honor amongst other your good
delyghtes, to delyght moste in reading Hystories,
the true Image and portrature of mans lyfe and
that not as many doe, to passe away the tyme, but
to gather there of such indgement and knowledge
as you may thereby be the more able, as well to
direct your private actions, as to give Counsell
lyke a most prudent Counsellor in publyke causes,
be it matters of warre or peace.¹

¹Blunderville, True Order and Method etc., 154-155.

A few years later Richard Crompton (1573-1599) in describing the ideal "Kings Counsellor" in his Mansion of Magnanimitie says that they should be "men of great wisdom, very well learned, of long experience, well exercised in histories."² This was echoed by Barnable Barnes (1568-1609) when he wrote in the Four Bookes of Offices that "the knowledge of Hystories is another quality most concerning a counsellor," who should with "notable attention and dilligence . . . peruse and marke the Records, Annales, and Chronicles of all ages, people, and princes."³ One of the reasons which Henry Wright gives for the study of history in The First Part of the Disquisition of Truth Concerning Political Affaires is "that thereby a man may become a Statesman and know how to manage publique affairs, drawing his rules and directions out of antiquities, and times passed, as out of a Store-house, and making application thereof to the time present."⁴

Other examples of histories intended as manuals for

²Richard Crompton, The Mansion of Magnanimitie (London, 1599), Chapter 3, no pagination.

³Barnable Barnes, Four Bookes of Offices (London, 1570), 52.

⁴Henry Wright, The First Part of the Disquisition of Truth Concerning Political Affaires (London, 1616), 72.

statesmen were Camden's Annals and Francis Bacon's Historie of the reign of King Henry the Seventh,⁵ which was most representative of this type of writing. Bacon suggested that Prince Charles, to whom it was addressed, might find the history of Henry VII instructive and useful. Bacon assumed that history could teach men; this was the common assumption of his times. Where he differed from most of his contemporaries was that he did not suppose that history could teach moral lessons. Instead, what he hoped was that history might give a lively picture of the nature of mankind and teach lessons of policy and statecraft. Bred in the realistic tradition of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Bacon found a utilitarian value in the study of history: for it was from events and counsels that he drew those conclusions which served as valuable lessons for the politics of the present and the future. History, then, gave instruction in practical politics by example and analysis, a realistic analysis of human actions and motives.⁶

⁵Francis Bacon, Historie of the reign of King Henry the Seventh (London, 1622).

⁶E. F. Dean, "Sir Francis Bacon's Theory of Civil History-writing," Journal of English Literary History, VIII, 161-183. T. Wheeler, "Purpose of Bacon's History of Henry the Seventh," Studies in Philology, LIV, 1-13.

Perhaps the first political situation to which the study of history was deliberately applied was that which arose in Ireland toward the end of the sixteenth century, when the Elizabethan conquest confronted the English statesmen with the quite new problem of governing an alien race. Edmund Spenser, in his anthropological essay, View of the State of Ireland, urged that in order to understand the problem it was essential to have a knowledge of the racial origins and history of the Irish.⁷ Following in this same vein Sir John Davies (1569-1626), James I's anti-Catholic solicitor-general for Ireland, wrote A Discoverie of the True Causes Why Ireland was never entirely subdued, nor brought under Obedience of the Crowne of England, untill the Beginning of his Majesties happie Raigne.⁸ This set about to analyse the mistakes of English rule since Henry II as a guide in framing a new policy.

The study of history, then, was very much part of the nature of the Renaissance State, for it provided the statesmen with the rules of policy and the individual with inspiring examples of patriotism. Of course the relationship between

⁷ Fox, English Historical Scholarship, 50.

⁸ Sir John Davies, A Discoverie of the True Causes, etc. (London, 1612).

history and politics was not all that simple, because while some branches of historical inquiry proved profitable and necessary, others were dangerous. "Things Manifest, I have not concealed," Camden wrote in the Annals, "Things Doubtful I have tenderly interpreted: the more Abstruse, I have not been too inquisitive of." He proceeds to quote Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus against "those curious, inquisitive people, who will needs seek to know more than by the Laws is permitted them."⁹ This warning notwithstanding the view of history as a handbook for Statesmen took deep roots during this period.

A development intertwined with the evolution of history as a teacher of morals to that of a teacher of political wisdom was the evolution of the theory of explanation or causation of historical events. If history were to be a handbook for statesmen a more earth-bound answer to the question why was needed than the simple answer "God's Providence" which had sufficed for the purpose of morals.

Of this moral-providential type of causation many examples can be brought forward. Richard Knolles (1545-1610), for instance, in the "Authors Introduction to the Christian

⁹ Camden, Annals, "Author to the Reader," no pagination.

reader" in his Historie of the Turkes divides the causes of events into two. The first and greatest he maintains is "the just and secret judgement of the Almighty, who in justice delivereth into the hands of these merciless miscreants [the Turks], nation after nation, and kingdom upon kingdom, as unto the most terrible executioners of his dreadful wrath, to be punished for their sinnes." Other causes he lumps under the name "the uncertaintie of worldly things," without giving further details.¹⁰

But, perhaps, this theory of causation is best summed up in this period by Sir Walter Raleigh in the History of the World. This work is considered the crown of the moralizing histories, the last great flourish of the medieval ideal of Providential History. For Raleigh, God is the first cause of all things; nature, including man, is meaningless without God. And God alone is the source of all power, though He does operate through the medium of secondary causes. Raleigh likened these secondary causes to conduits and pipes, which carry and displace what they have received from the head and fountain of the universal. He writes, "But where God hath a purpose to destroy, wise men grow short-lived, and the

¹⁰Knolles, Historie of the Turkes, in "Introduction," no pagination.

charge of things is committed unto such as either cannot see what is for their good, or know not how to put in execution any sound advice." The fall of empires is not caused by such secondary causes as internal strife or external force, but, rather "divine providence . . . hath set downe the date and period of every estate, before their foundation and erection." Against those who object to this adversity he wrote in the Preface:

For seeing God, who is the author of all our tragedies, hath written out for us, and appointed us all the parts we are to play: and hath not, in their distribution beene partiall to the most mighty Princes of the world; that gave unto Darius the part of the greatest emperor, and the part of the most miserable beggar, a beggar begging water of an Enemy to quench the great drought of death; that appointed Bajazet to play the Grand Signor of the Turks in the morning and in the same day the Footstool of Tamerland....why should other men, who are but of the least worms, complain of wrongs? Certainly there is no other account to be made of this ridiculous world than to resolve, That the change of fortune on the great Theatre, is but as the change of garments on the lesse. For when on the one and the other, every man weares but his owne skin, the Players are all alike.¹¹

Of course Raleigh was too good a writer to bore his audience by insisting that divine intervention is always the cause. He posited secondary causes such as climate and geography or corruption and sensuality, but he recognized them as

¹¹ Raleigh, History of the World, Sign. D verso.

conjecture, yet conjecture has its purpose. Of Raleigh it can be said in principle he stressed the role of God as the first cause, while in practice he was willing to admit secondary causes.

The influence of the Renaissance, especially the Italian historians and the growing availability of documents and other sources, led to a gradual change in attitude toward causation. Camden, foremost among his contemporaries, can be noted as always seeking the answers to why events took place by going to the records and applying the principles of disciplined scholarship to the problem of causation. Not that he was without reference to Providence, but, on the whole, secondary causes were the more important.

Perhaps one of the major touchstones in the evolution of attitude is to be found in Francis Bacon's Descriptio Globi Intellectualis (1612), where in his division of history Sacred or Ecclesiastical History lost the separate status which it had held previously and was placed under the general heading, Civil. Such a loss of independent status also meant loss of special privileges. Not that the influence of God was denied but that Sacred History was to be written under the same rules as other histories. Bacon's conception of causes is human rather than supernatural. The possibility of divine

control was not denied, but by the writing of De Augmentis (1623) it was effectually ignored by being relegated to a separate historical category, the History of Providence and of Prophecies and their accomplishments. And he sees little profit in this kind of narrative except, perhaps, to frighten a few wicked persons. The utility of history springs rather from a realistic analysis of human actions and motives. This was his method of attack in the Historie of Henry VII, but he was too narrow in his analysis of the causes. He explains events almost wholly by an interpretation of personal motives, and neglects social and economic causes. Bacon, like Machiavelli, seemed dominated by a formal conception of politics as a play of intrigue and a struggle for power. Such an emphasis, however, on the interpretation of hidden causes and motives easily opens the way to the introduction of fiction, however plausible, into history. It was enough for Bacon that the causes and motives adduced were probable; and probability, it was felt, could be secured more surely through practical experience than through research. In Henry VII Bacon still makes reference to the first cause but only for literary effect as when he says that Richard III was overthrown by "the Divine Revenge." But on the whole God was placed back in heaven and the earth was the possession of the children of man.

The development of the idea of history as a handbook for Statesmen coupled with the shift in emphasis in the "why" of history from God to secondary causes brought about an interest in the writing of accurate histories based on facts rather than conjecture or opinion. An increasing number of writers came to agree with John Trussell who stated that he forebore "to obtrude upon thee any thing of my owne invention . . . for History is or ought to be a perfect register of things formerly done truely: or at least warrantable by probabilitie." He went on to say that he had culled out the true as neer as he could gather it.¹² Barnes had pleaded for more accurate histories which could come about only "if men would faithfully search out the true records and memorials of realmes and commonweals."¹³ More concern for sources is evidenced by the increasing practice of listing the works consulted and of the use of marginal notes as we use footnotes for the purpose of documentation. Knolles wrote in his

¹² John Trussell, A Continuation of the Collection of the History of England, beginning where Samuel Daniell Esquire ended (London, 1636), "Epistle to the Reader," no pagination.

¹³ Barnes, Foure Bookes of Offices, 54.

Historie of the Turkes¹⁴ "I collected so much of the History as possibly I could, out of the writings of such as were themselves present and as it were eye-witnesses of the greatest part of that they writ." He then lists thirty-six authors from whom he drew his material; however, he was not above interpolating speeches or quoting the purport of letters when he did not have the actual documents to work with.

Richard Baker in his Chronicle of the Kings of England presents an annotated "Catalogue of Writers Both Antient and Modern Out of whom This Chronicle Hath been Collected," which lists ninety-three works.¹⁵ John Speed speaks of the "pains and travails" he endured, of the "care of truth" he took to lay his building (i.e. his history) upon strong arches; and he called upon the "Authorities alleaged through the whole Processe," to be his witnesses.¹⁶ He thanked Sir Robert

¹⁴Knolles, Historie of the Turkes, "To the Reader," no pagination.

¹⁵Richard Baker, A Chronicle of the Kings of England From the Time of the Romans government unto the Death of King James (London, 1684), no pagination.

¹⁶Speed, History of Great Britaine, 895-897.

Cotton¹⁷ for the many manuscripts, notes, and Records which he supplied. Speed throughout makes the reference to his sources, both printed and manuscript, in the margins of his works. Indeed it is from these references that we know Bacon's History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh existed in manuscript form long before it was printed.

Speed gave a special place to the works of the "most worthy and learned" Camden, and rightly so. For Camden like Bacon was one of the major watersheds in English historiography. Camden did for historical research what Bacon did for the philosophy of history. The publication of Camden's Britannia in 1586 established his reputation and set up a model of historical research which stands even to this day. In his "to the Reader" Camden gives a summary of his labors in preparing the work:

I have in no wise neglected such things as are most materiall to search and sift out the truth. I have attained to some skill of the most Ancient British and English-Saxon tongues: I have travailed over all England for the most part, I have conferred with

¹⁷ Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631) collected a large library of ancient records, charters, and other manuscripts many of which were from the dissolved monasteries. This and other collections of documents is another indication of the evolution in historical thought. Documents were collected in order to be used more efficiently; once collected, their easy accessibility spurred further research.

most skillfull observers in each county, I have studiously read over our owne countrie writers, old and new; all Greeke and Latine authors which have once made mention of Britaine. I have had conference with learned men in other parts of Christendome: I have beene diligent in the Records of this Realme. I have looked into most Libraries, Registers, and memorials of Churches, Cities, and Corporations, I have poored upon many an old Rowle, and Evidence: and produced their testimonie (as beyond all exception) when the cause required in their very owne words (although barbarous they be) that the honor of vertie might be in no wise be impeached.¹⁸

This is a worthy exemplum for any student of history to follow. Camden's painstaking investigation of the sources was again manifested in his Annales, a history of the reign of Elizabeth I, published in 1615. In it he thanks Lord Burghley who opened to Camden "some memorials of State of his own: afterwards those of the Kingdom." He continued listing his sources, "I sought all manner of helps on every side, I sedulously valued & revolved character of Kings & Peers, Letters, Consultations held at the Councell-Table; I ran through the instructions & letters of Ambassadors & likewise the Records & Journals of Parliaments, Acts & Statuts, & read over Proclamation." He, like Speed, also thanks Sir Robert Cotton for the use of his fine library.¹⁹

¹⁸ Camden, Britain, "to the Reader" no pagination.

¹⁹ Camden, Annals (1625), "Author to the Reader," no pagination.

These historians illustrate that a step had been taken in English historiography. The explanation and causes of events were to be sought in the "facts" - i.e., in the documents and writings of the time under study. The study of the events themselves became important; events were not to be studied with a view to re-enforce priormoral convictions. It is true that they were rather credulous toward "facts" and that many of the sources they relied on would not stand up under present standards of critical evaluation. This, however, does not deny their advance from opinions to document, from moralizing to investigation.

CHAPTER VI

THE HANDMAIDS OF HISTORY

The use of documents was conditioned by the growth of libraries and manuscript collections, the improved organization of the public archives, and the tolerant attitude to their being searched by historians. It must be noted that modern historiography rests on a framework of institutions. Without libraries, archives, and learned societies, the study of history would have progressed little. Experience has shown that for every advance in scholarship there has probably been some corresponding advance in the organization of scholarly institutions. Libraries, both public and private; public archives, both national and local; learned societies, both formal and informal - all have contributed to scholarship, indeed they have been vital to its progress. For historical scholarship in the Late Tudor and Early Stuart period the important institutions were not the universities, but the libraries, record offices and learned societies of England. By informal ties, through friendship and patronage the antiquaries and historians were associated with the librarians and record keepers. The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries did much to further co-operation between those who kept official records, those who collected books and manuscripts, and those

who used them.

The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries was founded in 1586 and was composed almost exclusively of men of substance who, by education and rank in society, belonged to the upper privileged class. John Speed, John Stow, William Camden, Robert Cotton, Arthur Golding, Walter Raleigh, Robert Bowyer, were members. With the exception of John Stow, all the forty known members were gentlemen; many were knights and two were noblemen. Thirty-two had studied law; thirty had at one time been members of Parliament; four were heralds; six were active diplomats or statesmen; and six were official record keepers. The Society held regular meetings until 1608 when it faded away due to lack of internal interest and the external disfavor of James I. But during its lifetime it actively promoted historical research and undoubtedly facilitated access to public records by the fact that record keepers were members and supported the Society's purposes.

One cannot fail to be impressed by the free intercourse among scholars not only within England but even between the British Isles and the Continent. Archbishop James Ussher, for instance, sent from Dublin his transcripts of Bodleian and Cottonian manuscripts to Professor Gerand Vos in Amsterdam.¹

¹C. R. Cheney, "Introduction: The Dugdale Tercentenary," in Fox, English Historical Scholarship, 5.

As difficulties of distance were overcome so were differences of political and religious creed. Dom Knowles gives the example of one August Baker (1575-1641), a Benedictine, who after some years abroad, returned to England as a missionary and to resume his research in London. He was an old friend of Sir Robert Cotton, and he knew Selden, Spelman, and Camden. Cotton gave him the freedom of his library and aided him to use the records at the Tower. There is even a record of a religious discussion between Baker and Ussher round Cotton's fireside in a room leading out of his library. "The memory lingers over the scene - The Benedictine monk in doublet and hose sparring with Ussher or copying records in the Tower where only a decade before the Gunpower conspirators had lain."²

Antiquarian studies were conducted in a clear stimulating atmosphere. The sultriness of professionalism had not yet descended; the horizon was broad. These men were enthusiastic in pursuing the past. Fussner, seeking to place the changes in historical writing and thought that took place in this period in their context, wrote, "England was still by modern standards, a small cohesive society, made up of overlapping communities. Individual members of the community of

²Fox, 121.

learning provided one another with scholarly help and information. Correspondence and conversation were often the substitute for modern printed directives and formal aids to research."³ These men, without a special organization for the purpose, shared the materials they had accumulated so that the industry of a laborious scholar was not lost entirely when he died. Leland's Itinerary and Commentaries and Collectanea circulated in manuscript in the next generation and were used by every historian of the later Tudor period.

John Leland (1506-1552), the King's Antiquary, can be called the founder of antiquarian study in England. The results of his six years of tireless journeys in search of English Antiquaries and records in the libraries of cathedrals, colleges, and monasteries were set down in his notes, still in undigested manuscript form at his death. As later published, the Itinerary is a description of his travels with full details of what he saw. Another work Collectanea, is devoted chiefly to the results of his examination of ancient libraries. These works, however, cannot be considered as a finished whole or a literary product since they consist of memoranda often jotted

³ F. Smith Fussner, The Historical Revolution (London, 1962), 68.

down as the writer finished his day's journey and arranged without much relevance one to the other. Although great expectations were aroused in his contemporaries by his projected history and the industry with which he collected material, his plan never came to fruition.⁴

In one sense, the greatest achievement of the antiquaries was their accumulation of material for historical, linguistic, and archaeological study and the making of it available to others. But a total estimate of what these men did must mark the reason why they did it. They did not accumulate aimlessly. Although one motive was to salvage material that stood in danger of destruction, they had specific questions in mind. They were investigating origins: origins of institutions, and families, and places. Particular inquiries, such as Selden's on tithe, forced their authors to seek out new evidence with strict attention to chronology, to treat it logically, and to look for causal connexions. Since historians were asking new questions they could not proceed, as so many medieval historians had proceeded, by simply repeating what someone else had written and by merely adding a

⁴James W. Thompson, A History of Historical Writing (New York, 1942), I, 607.

little more. As professor Cheney points out, "Accumulation of material led inevitably to comparison, comparison to criticism."⁵ These men were conscious and proud that they were tapping new sources.

The public records are indispensable to the historian, for no nation's history can be accurately written without access to its public records and archives.⁶ Now in the sixteenth century the King's subjects were still interested in the public records chiefly as litigants, landowners, and taxpayers, not as students of history. They went to the records for ammunition for their lawsuits, to uphold a title or a tenure, to maintain a right, to prove a grant or agreement. One could say that the primary reason for preserving records of all kinds for centuries was a legal reason in England, not a historical one.

A change in this attitude slowly took place during our period. The constitutional debates of the early Stuart era took somewhat the form of a prolonged lawsuit between Crown and Parliament, and, like other lawsuits, it involved

⁵Fox, 8.

⁶R. B. Wernham, "The Public Records in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Fox, 11-30, gives a general impression of the state of the archives during the period.

much search among records by both parties. The issues raised, however, were so much broader, so much more generalized that they virtually elevated legal searches into historical research. The constitutional debates, moreover, encouraged the growth of antiquarian studies, which in their turn stimulated more purely historical researches. This creation of a wider interest in the public records, an historical interest, could hardly be satisfied with conditions of access and means of reference designed primarily to meet the narrower and more specialized needs of legal searchers.

We can at this point ask, what, then, were the public records in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Wernham presents us with the classification of Arthur Agarde, who in the reign of James I divided the public records into two broad types. First there were what he called Arcana imperii, documents concerned with "matters of estate and the crown only." Secondly, there were the legal and financial records which concerned both the interest of the Crown and the rights, tenures, and titles of the subjects. Now, of these only the more formal legal and financial documents in the second group were public records in the sense that the public had reasonably ready and regular access to them upon payment of fees. All the first group, the arcana imperii, and many documents

in the second group were the private muniments of the King, his Court, and his government. They were not accessible to the subject except by very special grace and favor. Even among the more easily accessible records prolonged and extensive searches could hardly be made without special authority or at least official goodwill.⁷ Yet in spite of all this more and more records were being consulted by a greater number of people. To satisfy this growing demand books on record searching were published early in the seventeenth century.⁸ Scholars gained access to the public records in one of four ways: (1) by paying the fees; (2) by consulting records and transcripts in private hands; (3) by official warrants; (4) by influence or patronage.⁹

Whatever means he used to gain access to the records, the scholar had a task before him of tracking down the documents. By the end of the sixteenth century the decentralization of the public records had already been carried to an

⁷Fox, 11-12.

⁸Thomas Powell, Direction for Search of Records (London, 1622) cited in Fussner, 73.

⁹Fussner, 88.

extreme.¹⁰ The Lord Chancellor had general jurisdiction over records, which he shared, however, with the Master of the Rolls and the Lord Treasurer. There was no clearly defined chain of command and an overlapping of jurisdiction could even lead to a knock-down drag-out fight between servants of the various record keepers.¹¹ In general it may be said that there were four main groups of record repositories at the end of Elizabeth's reign: (1) The Rolls House and the Tower of London; (2) The Four Treasures at Westminster; (3) The State Paper Office at Whitehall; (4) the various separate offices of the courts and of the departments. Each had its own keeper or keepers and its own rules and regulations.

Not only were the national records of interest to the historian but there was a growing interest in local records and history as well as an interest in family history.¹² Stow's

¹⁰As Wernham points out there was little public or bureaucratic pressure toward centralization, largely because current administration was more important than research and because the value of records lay chiefly in their usefulness for reference in current business of the office or in the fees that they yielded from searchers. Fox, 15.

¹¹Fox, 17.

¹²See Michael Maclagan, "Genealogy and Heraldry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Fox, 31-48.

Survey of London was the result of sixty years of close observation on interviews with the leading London citizens and study of the city records. Many provincial towns had a resident antiquarian who was interested in local records and monuments. John Hooker held office and pursued his antiquarian and historical research in Exeter, where he set in order and catalogued the city records for his own and posterity's use. The developing interest in family history was in part a reflection of the heraldic and genealogical interest of the nobility and the gentry. But historians and antiquaries were also mindful of what local and family history told them of English history at large. Fussner sums up the interest in the various archives in these words.

Research in a wide variety of records had not been characteristic of medieval historiography, but by the end of Elizabeth's reign, local, family, national, and ecclesiastical archives were all being explored. Antiquaries and historians made transcripts of records and took notes on all kinds of documents which held traces of the past. Some made collections which they hoped would prove useful to them in their work; others no doubt collected information only out of curiosity, or because antiquarianism was a respectable hobby. Indirectly, however, all such activity contributed to the formation of a new attitude toward history as record.¹³

Perhaps even more important for the writing of history

¹³Fussner, 34.

than the record offices were the libraries.¹⁴ Without well-stocked libraries the study of comparative history would have been impossible. By the end of the sixteenth century medieval ecclesiastical documents had very often passed into private hands, and the chronicles and literary sources of medieval Europe - the foundation stones of every historical account - were accessible only in libraries. There was at this time a trend toward consolidation which meant that various private libraries were being acquired by a few individuals or institutions. Camden, for example, had acquired by purchase some of Leland's historical collections which he made use of in his own work. Some of Camden's collections passed to Cotton on Camden's death, and Cotton also acquired by bequest portions of the antiquarian collections of Arthur Agarde, Francis Thynne, Robert Bowyer, Michael Meneage, John Joscelyn, William Lambarde, Laurence Nowell, and Thomas Talbot.¹⁵ By purchase Camden gained some of John Stow's historical manuscripts, and such, on a much larger scale, were often made by Cotton and a few other collections.

¹⁴ See Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright, eds. The English Library before 1700 (London, 1958).

¹⁵ Ibid., 197-198.

In contrast to the continent where the consolidation of the territorial monarchies had led to the founding of great public libraries under government auspices, in England, libraries were founded mostly by individuals. These might be statesmen like Walsingham and Cecil, bishops like Matthew Parker, or private men of means and position like Bodley and Cotton. The library of the Cecils was in many ways typical of the great libraries founded by high officials and by some members of the aristocracy. The Cecil collection was unusual in that it contained not a few, but masses of state papers, which had been carted off to Hatfield House. Camden called the Cecil library Bibliotheca instructissima, and with good reason, for he drew heavily on Cecil's collection when writing the history of Elizabeth's reign. Another patron of libraries was Sir Thomas Bodley, whose offer to restore the old public library at Oxford was accepted in 1598. He dedicated the remainder of his life to this task of re-establishment and augmentation of the much depleted library. He accomplished this by his own purchases of books and manuscripts and by inducing his acquaintances to assist. Robert Cotton, Henry Saville and Thomas Allen were among the principal contributors to the library, which opened November 8, 1602, with upwards of 2,000 volumes. In 1610 he obtained a grant from the

Stationer's Company of a copy of every book printed. The library's collection grew so rapidly that the building was extended by an east wing built in 1610-1612. Bodley not only began the permanent endowment of the library by the gift of a farm and some houses in London, but he made it his chief heir.

The consolidation of private collections, along with the improved institutional arrangements for the care and use of manuscripts and books greatly facilitated the writing of history. Scholars knew in general where to look for particular materials. Few of England's libraries were as well arranged as Sir Robert Cotton's, but at least the greater libraries were performing their institutional functions.

Although it is generally true that libraries at this period were either bristling with restrictions and guarded with a vigilance that kept them from being widely used or else not properly guarded at all, the plight of the scholar was not thereby rendered desperate. The personal influence and patronage of the community of learning was powerful enough to secure privileges for its members, who were able to borrow from or at least consult, most of the major collections. The real tests of a scholar - patience, perseverance, and eyesight - were likely to occur after he had secured his entree to the

library.

Books were catalogued in most libraries by size rather than by author or subject matter. If one did wish to spend his time carefully going through a poorly catalogued collection, he might find himself at the mercy of a hurried and possibly ignorant librarian. Often, especially at college libraries, one was subject to restrictions, and not infrequently he had to suit the convenience of a number of indifferent or hostile officers in charge of keys. One almost froze in winter, and even in summer he might discover that a poorly lighted room was an ill place to examine and transcribe a manuscript. It is no wonder that scholars were unstinting in their praise of Cotton's professionally-run library.¹⁶

Bishop Montague called Cotton's library "the magazine of history." Indeed, it would be extremely difficult to overestimate the significance of Cotton's library for the growth of historical scholarship.

In one field alone - the political and religious history of England from the reign of Henry VIII through Elizabeth and James I - the library contained nearly 100 volumes of original state papers and exact transcripts. An astonishing amount of state papers from the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth rested on Cotton's shelves. One press

¹⁶Fussner, 66.

contained 43 volumes relating to domestic and foreign affairs, some bearing notes by Cecil; another press contained 50 volumes of such papers bearing on England's relations with Portugal, Spain, Russia, Poland, the Scandinavian countries, the Hanseatic League, Holland, Turkey, and the near East.¹⁷

Nearly every English historian of note in the seventeenth century made some use of this great library. Even its physical location was advantageous for Cotton's house was strategically located next door to the Rolls House. A stairway led down from Cotton's garden to the Thames, where Cotton could find ready transportation to the record repositories in the Tower.

One historian helped by Cotton was John Selden.

Selden was greatly in Cotton's debt and dedicated his best known and most controversial book, The Historie of Tithes, to him. Although Selden accumulated one of the best libraries in England he still found Cotton's storehouse indispensable. Cotton, furthermore, opened doors which were closed even to Selden. Perhaps because of the notoriety of The Historie of Tithes, Selden had to ask Cotton for help in 1624, in order to borrow materials from Westminster Library of the Lord Bishop of London.¹⁸ This is but one of many examples of

¹⁷ Ibid., 146-147.

¹⁸ Ibid., 135.

Cotton's scholarly aid and influence.

Cotton's contribution to English historiography goes beyond the fact that his library was a "magazine of history" or that it was a great source of influence. Cotton's dealings with the lesser government officials, the men who controlled and used the public records of England was of major importance. Whether they applied to Cotton for help in their official duties, or in connection with their private scholarly pursuits, these bureaucratic officials could count on Cotton's generosity. In return, such men could help Cotton, or those whom Cotton might choose to help. By the end of Elizabeth's reign Cotton's library had become one of the great roadsteads of the learned world, and from all over the British Isles and the continent letters discussing books, manuscripts, and antiquities found their way there. Sir Robert Cotton has been eulogized in these words:

Why Cotton's name should be honoured as one of the founders of modern English historiography should now be clear. The scattered contents of monastic libraries were preserved for use largely by Cotton's efforts. In an age given to drawing morals and precedents from history, Cotton provided not only what was expected, but also the indispensable means and support for critical, scholarly historiography. Thanks in large part to Cotton's exemplary patronage, the standards of English historical writing and thought were redefined. The debt of good scholarship

to good librarianship cannot be too heavily emphasized.¹⁹

Cotton's library was unique in many ways, and was, indeed, the finest and most accessible institution of research in the Late Tudor and Early Stuart England.

The advance and improvement in the institutions of research - learned Societies, public records, and libraries - were invaluable to that evolution of Historiography which we have seen took place during this era. For the demand for better, more factual histories would have been frustrated if the documents had not been available due to the efforts of the scholarly institutions, the handmaids of history.

¹⁹Ibid., 149.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

We have seen that History was considered an important field of study by Englishmen in the Late Tudor and Early Stuart Eras, whether they saw it as a teacher of morals or as a teacher of political wisdom or as, more likely, a combination of both. History was praised as the "Faithful preserver of things past, that great instructor of the present, and certaine Profit of the future."¹ Peter Heylyn has summarized for us his ages-view of the benefits of History:

1. It is the rule of direction, by whose square we ought to rectify our obliquities, and in this sense the Orator calleth it Magistra vitae.

2. It stirreth men to virtue and deterreth them from vice.

3. It hath been not only the inventor but also the conserver of all arts, such especially whose end consisteth in action.

4. It informeth a man's mind in all particular observations, making him serviceable to his prince and country.

5. It is the best schoolmaster of war, the teacher of stratagems, and giveth more directions than a whole Senate.

6. It is the Politicians best assistant and chief tutor.

¹William Harbington, Observation on Historie (London, 1641), Sign. A₄ recto.

7. It is most available to the study of Divinity.

8. It is (lastly and least of all), the study which affordeth a man the greatest aid in discoursing; it delighteth the ear, and contenteth the mind.²

Such a beneficial study was pursued by all the literate classes, especially by the expanding Middle-Class. These busy and practical people wanted to know history and they wanted it "neat," as John Sleidon put it - history should be "succinct" so "any man may at first view behold the whole of history."³ This caused a demand for chronicles and epitomes of histories, in particular those of England. But the popularity of these forms should not lead us to think that the tastes in historical reading was narrow, for it surely was not; on the contrary, it was wide and varied. The demand for more and better histories brought about a response from the writers of history. They began to seek to understand what their office as an historian entailed and how they could attain these ends. Some, like Sir Francis Bacon and William Camden thought deeply on the matter and acted in a manner to bring about major steps in the evolution of historiography. The

² Heylyn, Cosmographie, 20-21.

³ John Sleidon, The Key of Historie (London, 1635), Sign. B₄ recto.

use of sources such as documents and records came more and more to replace opinion and conjecture as the stuff out of which history is written. This, in part, was occasioned by the need of a realistic presentation of the "facts" if history were to be handbook for Statesmen.

This writer would conclude that historical reading had a vast influence on the literate Englishman of the period. Moral and political lessons were to be found in it; the past glory of the nation was held before their eyes and they were made to value its future. They learned patriotism and loyalty to the State; they learned the practical lessons of statecraft. Perhaps it is only fitting to end with a hymn of praise to history written by an Englishman of the period:

. . . O Histories! You soveraigne balmes to the bodyes of the dead, that preserve them more fresh then if they were alive, keep ye fames of Princes from perishing, when marble monuments cannot save their bones from being rotten, you faithful entelligensers betweene Kingdoms and Kingdomes, Your truest counsellor to Kings, even in their greatest dangers! Hast thou an ambition to be equall to Princes! read such bookes as are the Chronicles of Ages, gone before thee: there maiest thou finde lines drawne (if vertue be thy guide) to make the paralell with the greatest Monarch: wouldest thou be above him, there is ye scale of him ascending [] Hunttest thou after glory? marke in those pathes how others have run, and follow thou in the same course. Art thou sicke in minde? (and so to be diseased, is to be sicke even to ye death) there shalt thou finde physicke to cure thee,

art thou sad? where is sweeter musicke even in reading?
art thou poore? open those closets, and invaluable
treasures are powred into thy hands.⁴

⁴Thomas Dekker, Worke For Amourours 1609
(Reprinted London, 1885), 101-102.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Reverend Robert William Mallonee, S.V.D. has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

September 5, 1967
Date

William R. Smith
Signature of Adviser